

Oliver-McDonald Company  
Eighth building from the east on the block  
between Bond and Hudson streets  
Plains  
Sumter County  
Georgia

HABS No. GA-2221

HABS  
GA,  
131-PLAIN,  
12-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
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131-PLAIN,  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

OLIVER-McDONALD COMPANY  
(Hugh Carter's Antique Store)

HABS No. GA-2221

Location: Eighth building from the east in the Main Street business block between Hudson and Bond streets, Plains, Sumter County, Georgia.

USGS Plains Georgia Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator  
Coordinates: Zone 16, E 746200 N 3546900.

Present Owner: Hugh Alton Carter.

Present Occupant/ Use: Hugh Carter's Antique Store.

Significance: The buildings in the business block were erected between 1896-1916 as brick was used to gradually replace the original wood-frame structures. Situated southwest of the Plains Depot, this block was the business hub for the region prior to the Depression.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1913 (Americus Times Recorder, May 14, 1913).
2. Original and subsequent owners: The following is a chain of title to the to the land on which the building stands. Deeds are from the Clerk's Office, Sumter County Courthouse, Americus, Georgia.
  - 1900 Deed December 4, 1900, recorded August 19, 1912, Deed Book LL, Page 168. Oliver-McDonald sold the store lot west of the brick storehouse of the Oliver-French Co. to M.L. Hudson for \$600.
  - 1912 Deeds November 5-7, 1912, Deed Book LL, pages 246-47. John McDonald purchased a 30' x 100' lot known as the Chappell Drug Store from K.C. Campbell and M.L. Hudson Jr. (executors of the will of M.L. Hudson) for \$2,130. Two days later, John McDonald sold the property to the Oliver-McDonald Co. for the same price.
  - 1931 Deed September 29, 1931, Deed Book 13, page 240. The Oliver-McDonald Company to Ross Dean, a lot 60' x 100' containing two, two-story buildings.
  - 1941 Deed March 15, 1941, recorded March 18, 1941, Deed Book 26, Page 96. The estate of Ross Dean (W.A. Carter, executor) to J.C.

Webb for \$3,500, a 30' x 100' lot, including a two-story store house, bounded on the west by the Timmerman estate and the east by a building occupied by the Plains Mercantile Company and owned by Ross Dean.

1944 Deed March 10, 1944, recorded March 18, 1944, Deed Book 29, page 265. J.C. Webb sold to W.A. Carter a 30' x 100' lot known as the Dean Funeral Home, bounded on the east by the Plains Mercantile Company and the west by the Timmerman estate.

1946 Deed November 5, 1946, recorded November 5, 1946, Deed Book 34, page 127. W.A. Carter to the Plains Mercantile Company, for \$500. Plains Mercantile also owned the adjacent building on the east.

1971 Deed March 15, 1971, recorded March 14, 1972, Deed Book 120, page 166. Plains Mercantile Company to Hugh Alton Carter.

3. Original plans and construction: None have been located.
4. Alterations and additions: A safe was added to the southeast corner and a bathroom to the southwest.

B. Historical Context: This structure was built to expand the Oliver-McDonald Company located in the two adjacent buildings (see HABS Nos. GA-2219 and GA-2220). The Americus Times Recorder reported in 1913:

This season is being marked by much construction work in Plains, and the ring of the hammer is heard here every day. Several new buildings are going up now, while there will be others later. The Oliver McDonald Company is engaged in adding and has just about completed a two-story brick annex, which will be used for the furniture department of that well-known firm. This will give this large firm excellent facilities for handling its large and varied trade.

The new annex was built on the site of the frame drugstore run by J.E. Chappell. Several years after this annex was completed, Ross Dean moved his funeral parlor here from the second building from the east end of the business block (see HABS No. GA-2215). The Oliver-McDonald Company was listed in a 1909-10 business directory as not only a general merchandise and furniture store, but also as an undertaker.<sup>1</sup> Most likely, Dean originally worked with the Oliver-McDonald Company when he began his business, but rented space down the street as the furniture company expanded. When the annex was constructed, he moved back up the street around 1917. Dean's duties were not limited to undertaking, however; a 1921 directory lists him as the secretary/treasurer of

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<sup>1</sup> Young and Co.'s Business and Professional Directory, 1909-10, p. 499.

the Oliver-McDonald Company. The collaborative efforts of undertakers and furniture makers was common at the time; the undertaker preparing the body for burial and the furniture company providing the casket. The building was constructed with a manually operated elevator that was probably installed expressly for the transport of caskets from the second-floor preparation area to the first floor. Dean's business thrived, and he eventually purchased the building as well as the adjacent one on the east in the 1930s.

When Dean died in 1941, his undertaking establishment was sold to an assistant, J.C. Webb. The deed for the sale listed the capital assets as caskets, vaults, furniture, fixtures, embalming-room equipment, a 1939 Chevrolet Hearse, and 1928 and 1940 Buick Flexible Combination Hearses.<sup>2</sup> Webb began working for Dean when he was 12 years old and eventually studied mortuary science at the American Academy of Embalmers and Mortuaries Research in New York City. He managed a funeral home in Montezuma, Georgia owned by Dean in 1937, but returned to Plains to run the Dean Funeral home until his retirement in the 1940s.<sup>3</sup>

In 1944, William Alton Carter (brother of Jimmy Carter's father, Earl Carter) purchased the building to expand his Plains Mercantile Company founded in 1909 (see HABS No. GA-2217). In 1946, Hugh Carter, Jimmy Carter's cousin, began raising crickets in a coffin on the second floor of his father's store. Soon the business became the largest mail-order fish-bait industry in the world. The volume of worms and crickets being sent from the town through the post office changed postal designation of Plains from a third-, to second-class. Carter now grows worms on a farm on the outskirts of town and runs the business out of the bank building on Main Street (see HABS No. GA-2218) and sells souvenirs and antiques in this building, as well as the adjacent building to the east. The store carries many souvenirs of Plains and the Carters and gained considerable publicity during the Carter campaign and presidency.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This two-story vernacular building has a recessed first-floor storefront and a second floor-storage/office space. It is narrow and deep with modest turn-of-the-century design.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: This two-story 30'-0" x 100'-0" rectangular structure

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<sup>2</sup> Deed Book 26, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> Beth Walters, History of Plains, Georgia, 1885-1985, 1985, pp. 52-53.

has a three-bay facade.

2. Foundations: Brick.
3. Walls: Brick laid in seven-course American bond on the north, west and south walls; the east wall is shared with the adjacent building. The three-bay front/north facade has brick corner pilasters; the eastern pilaster is shared with the adjacent building. Brick stringcourses, two above the second-story windows and one below, are composed of soldier course bricks.
4. Structural system, framing: Load-bearing brick.
5. Porches: A shed roof of corrugated metal runs the length of the front facade and those of the three buildings to the east. It is supported on rectangular wood posts atop battered concrete pedestals.
6. Chimneys: Several small brick flues along the parapets served wood- or coal-burning stoves.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: A single wood door, largely glazed, is centered in the north/front facade. Above the door is a three-light fanlight topped by a brick arch composed of a projecting row of headers above three rows of rowlocks, with corbelling at the springline.

Double wood doors centered in the rear/south facade feature with three light glazing above the transom.
  - b. Windows: Large fixed windows on the front facade, first story, are topped by fanlights similar to that over the door. Three second-story windows on the front facade are two-over-two-light double-hung wood sash with brick rowlock lug sills and arches composed of two rows of rowlocks topped by a projecting course of headers. Three boarded-up rear windows have identical sills and arches.
8. Roof: The flat rectangular roof is slightly angled and has parapets and a brick cornice on the north/front facade.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:
  - a. First floor: The large, rectangular space is open with a

partitioned counter in the rear. Behind the counter on the east side of the south wall is a large brick room that contains a safe. There is a bathroom partitioned off in the southwest corner.

- b. Second floor: A single, large, rectangular space.
- 2. Stairways: None. Second floor is accessed by an elevator and the stairway in the adjacent building.
- 3. Flooring: Wood tongue-and-groove boards.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls are covered with approximately 1" thick plaster over brick. The first-story ceiling is clad with decorative pressed tin; the second story is wood tongue-and-groove panelling.
- 5. Doorways and doors: Two large arched doorways have been cut through the east walls on both floors thus allowing access to the adjacent store. A hollow-core flush door leads to the bathroom, and a heavy, metal door to the safe.
- 6. Mechanical equipment:
  - a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Air circulation is aided by large window fans in the front and back of the store, and ceiling fans. Gas space heaters are employed in cold weather.
  - b. Lighting: Electric fluorescent strip lighting.
  - c. Plumbing: There is a toilet and sink in the bathroom. Adjacent to the bathroom on the south wall is a drinking fountain.
  - d. Elevator: An approximately 6' x 8' wood platform near the center of the west wall rises by a manually operated pulley system to the second floor.
  - e. Safe: An approximately 2.5-on safe is located in the bricked-in room in the southeast corner of the store. It is inscribed with "Hibbard, Rodman and Ely No. 199 patent, N.Y. Size 5."
  - f. Kerosene pump: Located in the rear of the store, this pump supplied kerosene from a tank behind the store.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: The Oliver-McDonald 1913 annex is the eighth in a row of eight buildings. A large parking lot is located west of

the building.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings: None have been located.

B. Interviews:

Hugh Alton Carter, current owner, interview by Elizabeth Barthold, June 1989, Plains, Georgia.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: Deeds are from the Clerk's Office, Sumter County Courthouse, Americus, Georgia.

2. Secondary and published sources:

"Building Boom is now on at Plains; Much Construction Work is Being Done." Americus Daily Times Recorder, May 14, 1913.

Walters, Beth A History of Plains, 1885-1985, Americus, GA: Gammage Print Shop, 1985.

Young and Co.'s Business and Professional Directory 1909-10, p. 199.

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